Prince Edward Island
CANADA

Community and Cultural Affairs

A Cultural Policy for Prince Edward Island

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Message from the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs

I am very proud, on behalf of our partners in the cultural community of the province to present *A Cultural Policy for Prince Edward Island*.

This policy document is a tool that will help government departments and our partners in the arts, heritage and cultural industries recognize and embrace the principles that govern our strategies and actions in this significant area. Collaborating with one another, we will ensure that our cultural identity not only survives but that it thrives.

Our collective culture embraces our diversity, and celebrates a commitment to excellence. We will honour our past and welcome our future – confident that culture is one of the hallmarks of our community.

While this document is a statement of our commitment to culture, the document is not an end in itself. It represents a new commitment to culture but one which is based on a continuing dedication to involvement. I hope that the direction set forth in *A Cultural Policy for Prince Edward Island* will be a new beginning as we move to implement strategies which build on a shared vision and on existing strengths in the arts, heritage and our cultural industries.

Sincerely,

Elmer MacFadyen
Minister, Community and Cultural Affairs

A Cultural Policy for Prince Edward Island

> *"Culture needs no other rationale for support than the very deep societal need for its existence. Any society, any nation, any province aspires to a strong identity. That identity is built to a large extent on culture."*
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> *— Culture . . . Itself a Treasure p. 7*

Culture is not easily defined. It is a sweeping concept that encompasses many fields of human endeavour. In its simplest terms, culture is the way of life of a people. When people think of their culture they often reflect upon values, beliefs, heritage, language and unique forms of creative expression. These are the elements that distinguish a given society. These aspects of our culture are evident in the artistic, cultural and heritage milieus; when these are vibrant and healthy so, too, is our society.

While there are commonly held views about what constitutes culture, the breadth of culture can challenge those assumptions. In Prince Edward Island such aspects of our lives as the appreciation for harness racing, the impact of rural agriculture exhibitions and our celebration of festivals and events are as much a part of our culture as are theatre, music and heritage.

People, not governments, create culture. In many respects government is really the reflection of the culture of a people. However, the policies and commitments of a governing body can make a substantial difference in maintaining our cultural vitality.

The role of a modern, democratic government is to encourage freedom of expression and to facilitate its dissemination throughout society. It should promote

artistic growth, development and renewal, and a healthful exchange of creative ideas.

As such, the Government of Prince Edward Island wishes to create an atmosphere in which the expression of our culture is nurtured and supported through committed and sustained effort — inclusive of all Islanders — in order to expand awareness, education, accessibility and development of cultural opportunities.

Prince Edward Island's cultural policy is intended as a framework of broad principles that guide the government's decision-making and actions with respect to the arts, cultural industries and heritage. It also provides Islanders with a way of monitoring government performance in these areas. Islanders from all regions, backgrounds and walks of life have contributed to the development of this policy. It reflects their ideas, concerns and hopes.

Background

The government of Prince Edward Island has actively encouraged development of the province's cultural life for many years by operating cultural institutions and facilities, financially supporting organizations and individuals and providing a variety of services. As needs and cultural concerns have evolved government's role has grown and changed in response. Cultural development is now recognized as an integral part of the mandate of several government departments, including those responsible for culture, heritage, libraries, recreation, economic development, tourism and education.

Cultural Context

Many factors influence the culture of Prince Edward Island, including social, technological, economic and our natural environment.

Social

Culture plays an important role in animating and informing dialogue of critical issues by encouraging an understanding and appreciation of diverse human experience. Diversity — an integral aspect of our Island existence — challenges many traditional assumptions relating to our society. Each of us experiences Prince Edward Island's culture differently because we have unique life experiences shaped by language, race, ethnic origin and spirituality. We become daily more conscious of our culture as a dynamic, organic, evolving entity. Prince Edward Islanders engage in cultural activities to widely varying degrees, depending on awareness, education, exposure, experience, accessibility and acceptance.

Technological

Two of the most powerful factors influencing our sense of who we are as Islanders are a history of sharing this place, and a legacy of innovative creative endeavours. The resulting developments have brought us forward into the 21st century as a modern, technologically advanced society.

We now live in a rapid-paced, changing world of new media and communications technologies which have significant impacts — both positive and negative — on the culture of Prince Edward Island. On the one hand, technology brings the risk of homogenizing human expression, ideas and values. On the other, it offers new and diverse forms of expression and the ability to distribute broadly both new and traditional products and services. As mentioned previously, culture itself is not a constant. With changing modes of expression, exemplified by the new technologies of communication, so too does our culture change.

Economic

Culture plays a powerful role in community development for both geographic and cultural communities. In a increasingly knowledge-based society such as ours, the increase in content-based media output, the growth of cultural tourism, and the changing patterns of leisure and cultural consumption are all potential contributors to economic growth.

While support for culture can be justified economically or owing to its value to our collective identity, it is important to balance this with the intrinsic value of culture. Few Islanders could imagine life without stories, pictures, music and dance. Culture must, first and foremost, stimulate, delight, fascinate, and challenge people. These

experiences may indeed have larger public benefits, but the value to us individually is not realizable unless culture engages us on a personal level.

Natural Environment

It is natural — of nature — for our culture to reflect our place, the landscape in which we live and work, in our creative output and in our lifestyle, generally. The degree of respect for diversity and uniqueness in our people is symptomatic of our acceptance of these factors in our landscape. Without such respect, there is no healthful balance. As is the nature of mutually dependent and sympathetic organisms, if the environment is healthy and balanced, the people in that environment are, too.

The scope of cultural activities addressed by this policy

The types of cultural activities in which Prince Edward Islanders participate are a reflection of our cultural values. These values are as diverse as our individual heritages but are influenced by those around us. They evolve in response to our environment and other factors, and change as they pass from generation to generation. We look to our artists, musicians, actors, writers, dancers, teachers, historians, community leaders, and the institutions that support them to reflect who we were and who we are — to ourselves and to the world.

In this policy, the term *cultural activities* is used to refer to activities undertaken by individuals, organizations, institutions and businesses engaged in the arts, cultural industries and heritage. It includes the activities of Islanders of all cultures. In this way, the policy encompasses the population's full cultural diversity and the wide array of activities undertaken in these areas. It also acknowledges the importance of cultural endeavour at all levels, from the individual to the large organization. The breadth of cultural activities falls generally within three areas. It is crucial to note that there is considerable overlap among the categories.

The arts refers to the multitude of disciplines of artistic expression and fields of creation explored through crafts, literature, new media, the performing and the visual arts. The Arts can be both a product of our society and a reaction to it. People

active in this sector include both amateur and professional artists writers, actors, playwrights, photographers, visual artists, producers, curators, arts educators, entertainment promoters, and arts administrators. They may have local, regional, national and international audiences.

Heritage refers to the sector concerned with evidence of our personal and collective lives, past and present. This includes individuals and organizations who identify, collect, store, conserve, preserve, study, interpret, exhibit, communicate and provide access to heritage materials and experiences. These may be tangible items such as buildings, artifacts and natural resources, and intangible elements such as folklore, customs and spiritual values. People active in this sector include those involved in museums, libraries, archives, heritage preservation, and genealogical and historical societies.

Cultural industries refers to individuals, organizations or businesses involved in creating cultural products that express ideas or values, provide entertainment or have a functional or decorative use. Their markets and audiences may be local, regional, national or world-wide. People active in this sector include those involved in design, film and video, production crafts, cultural marketing, publishing and sound recording.

The provincial government's commitment to the arts, cultural industries, and heritage

Prince Edward Island enjoys its current wealth and diversity of cultural activities as a result of much hard work by people active in and concerned about the arts, cultural industries and heritage. The provincial government has also played a role in developing, preserving and promoting the province's cultural and heritage resources. Areas traditionally supported, such as archives, museums, libraries, theatres, crafts and amateur arts activities, have expanded in recent years to include professional performance arts development and cultural enterprises.

The provincial government recognizes the importance of ongoing, long-term, sustained support for the arts, cultural industries and heritage, as it understands the

contribution these make to quality of life for Prince Edward Islanders. Government is determined to:

- celebrate and promote the diverse forms of cultural expression in Prince Edward Island;
- ensure that Prince Edward Islanders have ways of developing their creative abilities, participating in cultural activities, and accessing cultural resources;
- educate children in the arts and promote opportunities for life-long learning;
- increase Prince Edward Islanders' understanding of their culture through knowledge of their heritage;
- promote the need for trained and skilled professional workers and volunteers to manage and develop our heritage resources and cultural activities;
- respect the ownership rights of people who produce works of art and cultural goods and services;
- promote public appreciation and understanding of culture;
- recognize the contribution made by the arts, cultural industries and heritage to community and economic development;
- promote a balance between preservation of and access to our natural and heritage resources;
- encourage quality in creative expression and the management of cultural activities;
- value culture for its own sake.

Principles to guide government's role in cultural activities

The Government of Prince Edward Island has a responsibility to provide development, nurturing, and support for cultural activities for the benefit of all Prince Edward Islanders. To ensure consistency in reviewing existing programs and developing new initiatives, the provincial government has identified and adopts the following principles:

- Lifelong education in the arts is essential if Prince Edward Island is to have a healthy and vibrant society.
- Cultural diversity is essential to the experience and expression of culture in the Island's society and respect for diversity is an essential part of our identity.
- Participation in cultural activities contributes to cultural, societal, economic and environmental health and well-being.
- Cultural activities play a significant role in sustaining and developing the social, educational, economic and spiritual life of our communities.
- People active in arts, cultural industries and heritage play a significant role in reflecting Prince Edward Island to ourselves and to the world.
- Cultural resources and opportunities should be accessible to all Prince Edward Islanders.
- Sustaining and developing cultural resources and activities is a responsibility jointly held by government, community and individuals.
- Skilled professional and volunteer cultural workers contribute significantly to the quality of cultural activities in the province.
- Artistic creation is essential to sustain Prince Edward Island's vibrant cultural life.
- Language forms an important foundation for cultural expression.

- Knowledge of Prince Edward Island's heritage contributes to understanding our present culture.
- Responsible management of heritage resources ensures their preservation for future generations of Prince Edward Islanders.
- Excellence is a standard to which we all can aspire.

Commitment

To fulfill these commitments the Government of Prince Edward Island will:

- provide funding to support the arts, cultural industries and heritage through grants, purchases and commissions;
- assist, operate and support cultural institutions in a manner that encourages continuity and consistently high standards of achievement;
- offer programs and services that encourage and support the growth of cultural activities;
- recognize the benefits of cultural initiatives in the education system;
- involve the community in cultural decision-making through consultation and arms-length mechanisms;
- co-operate with and help co-ordinate the efforts of other participants in the cultural sector;
- ensure that funds invested in cultural activities return benefits to Prince Edward Islanders.

Summary

The provincial government is committed to working with Prince Edward Islanders to define goals and objectives for developing the arts, cultural industries and heritage. It will develop strategies founded on the principles contained in this policy to help meet these goals and objectives. As with all publicly supported endeavours the government believes that a large cross-section of Islanders must and will benefit from these efforts.

Culture is not static and as culture changes so must government's approach to it. Through a continuous process of policy development , goal-setting, and review, the provincial government can help sustain and expand Prince Edward Island's dynamic, vital cultural life.